

VISA PROCESS FOR THE UNITED STATES

This is part of the ongoing question and answer series handled by the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai relating to the U.S. visa process. Readers are encouraged to submit their questions on U.S. visas to reporting.thehindu@gmail.com. The answers will be published in The Hindu on the last Wednesday of every month. For full official information on U.S. visas, visit <http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/visas.html>. Text of questions and answers provided by the U.S. Consulate:

My wife is a French National residing in Chennai on a stay visa issued by the Bureau of Immigration, Chennai. French nationals do not require a visa to visit U.S. if they are in possession of a Machine Readable passport. But the present passport issued to her by French Consulate at Pondicherry is an ordinary one valid till April 2012. The French Consulate refused to give a new one as the present passport is valid till 2012 and is not damaged and also told her that if she is planning to visit the U.S. she must go to the U.S. Consulate 72 hours before departure and take a visa. She is planning to visit U.S. towards the end of July 2010. What is the procedure to obtain a tourist visa?

French Nationals are part of the Visa Waiver Program, which enables nationals of 36 participating countries to travel to the United States for business or tourism (B1/B2 visa) for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. These applicants should register 72 hours in advance for travel authorization approval under the Electronic System for Travel Authorization using the website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html. However, one of the requirements to qualify under this program is a machine readable passport. Since your wife is currently unable to obtain a machine readable passport, she should apply for a B1/B2 (business or tourism) visa by completing the DS-160 application online and booking an appointment through VFS at: www.vfs-usa.co.in. She will need to attend a visa interview at a U.S. consulate in person and it is advisable for her to apply as soon as possible in order to avoid travel delays.

I am an Indian Citizen with a residence permit in Dominican Republic. I have transit visa for the U.S. I want to bring my wife and two children to DR. What is the possibility of getting transit visa for them? Can I accompany them to the interview because my sons are just a few years old. I wish to help them in the interview.

Your wife and children may apply for C1 transit visas by completing the DS-160 application online and booking an appointment through the website: www.vfs-usa.co.in. A decision on the visa application can only be made by the adjudicating officer at the time of the visa interview. Due to security regulations, only applicants are allowed to enter the building unless a person is accompanying minor children or assisting an applicant with medical/physical concerns. As your wife will be interviewing along with the children, you would not be allowed to accompany them. (THE HINDU, MAY 26)